

April 3, 2014

The Honorable Mary Landrieu
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Building, 135
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel Coats
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Hart Building, 125
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Landrieu and Ranking Member Coats:

As the subcommittee begins consideration of an appropriations bill for the agencies within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I respectfully request support for the programs listed below. The funding requested for the national programs is to be spent at the agencies' discretion within the existing budget line and is not intended for any specific business, state, community or other entity.

1. Title: Polar Ice Breaking Vessel Acquisition

Program Description: Survey and design activities for a new Coast Guard polar icebreaker, intended to provide continued U.S. Arctic icebreaking capability following the projected end of service life of CGC POLAR STAR on or about 2022. This effort will build upon requirements analyses undertaken within the past several years, including the High-Latitude Mission Analysis Report and the Polar Icebreaker Business Case Analysis.

Fiscal Year 2014 Enacted: \$1.376 million

Fiscal Year 2015 President's Budget Request: \$1.084 million

Additional Amount Requested: Support President's Budget Request

Budget Account: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Acquisition, construction and improvements, Vessels, Polar Ice Breaking Vessel

Rationale: Support design, development and formulation of an acquisition strategy of a new polar icebreaker to ensure the United States does not lose the capability as the Arctic becomes increasingly important. A new polar icebreaker is critical as existing assets are expected to be retired in 8 to 10 years, and design and construction of a new icebreaker will also take 8 to 10 years. Without action, the U.S. may find itself without any icebreakers and with no ability to project sovereignty or execute Coast Guard missions in the Arctic.

2. Title: Polar Ice Breaking Program - Operations and Maintenance

Program Description: Heavy Icebreaker Reactivation

Fiscal Year 2015 President's Budget Request: \$0

Additional Amount Requested: +\$100 million

Budget Account: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Operating Expenses, Polar Icebreaking Program Operations and Maintenance.

Rationale: The Coast Guard has invested considerable sums in extending the service life of the heavy icebreaker POLAR SEA, but an engine casualty caused the cutter to be taken out of service in 2011. Heavy icebreakers are key Coast Guard assets, especially as economic activity in the Arctic expands. The service only has one active icebreaker (the POLAR STAR) with approximately 10 years of service life remaining. The service should be provided with the means to reactivate the POLAR SEA and the requested funds should allow the vessel to be brought up to the same standards as the POLAR STAR, and have an approximate 10 additional years of service.

3. Title: Firefighter Assistance Grants

Fiscal Year 2014 Enacted: \$680 million

President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015: \$670 million

Additional Amount Requested: \$10 million

Budget Account: Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Firefighter Assistance Grants

Rationale: The President's budget proposal includes \$670 million – a \$10 million reduction from FY 2014 – with \$335 million for Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) and \$335 million for SAFER. The \$10 million increase will allow \$340 million for AFG and \$340 million for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program. These programs are crucial in providing funds to fire departments for recruiting, training and equipment.

4. Title: Coast Guard Fast Response Cutter Readiness

Report Language Requested: The Commandant shall adjust procurement guidelines for Small Business set-asides for fast response cutter maintenance and dry-docking to ensure that, for fast response cutters homeported in non-contiguous states without any shipyards that qualify as small businesses, such cutter maintenance packages can be conducted by a shipyard within their homeported Coast Guard District.

Rationale: Achieving homeport maintenance capability will ensure our nation's Fast Response Cutters are available and ready to meet requirements by decreasing time-out-of-fleet.

5. Title: Investing in Infrastructure Security

Report Language Requested: Of the funds made available, \$9.4 million shall be used by the Secretary of Homeland Security to further develop, test and demonstrate the field applicability of resilient building materials which are imbedded or integrated with advanced micro security sensors using nanotechnology, multiferroic, and other micro technologies, for enhancing security at government facilities and compounds.

Rationale: Tragic incidents like the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard and attack on the U.S. Consulate in Libya are clear indicators of a need for improved security. With relatively small investments in emerging “sensing” technology there is realizable potential for unprecedented improvement for security applications.

6. Title: Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program

Program Description: The program identifies flood hazards, assesses flood risks, and partners with States and communities to provide accurate flood hazard and risk data to guide them to mitigation actions. Flood Hazard Mapping is an important part of the National Flood Insurance Program, as it is the basis of the NFIP regulations and flood insurance requirements. FEMA maintains and updates data through Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and risk assessments.

Fiscal Year 2014 Enacted: \$95.202 million

Fiscal Year 2015 President’s Budget Request: \$84 million

Additional Amount Requested: \$10 million

Budget Account: Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis

Rationale: Recent flood insurance reform legislation highlights the need for accurate and actionable data collected through the Risk MAP process. The information collected through the mapping process drives Federal, State, local, and Tribal decision making regarding activities that can buy down risk to life and property across the country. The goal of buying down risk through mitigation activities can only be accomplished in concert with robust data sets that illustrate current gaps that progress can be measured against. However, under current funding levels, FEMA is merely maintaining current maps and does not have the resources to improve data for less populous regions or areas with lower home values. While FEMA has made progress on the percentage of the population covered by digital or updated flood maps, rural communities and less populous states continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of resources allocated to mapping these areas. Lack of data leads to less accurate mitigation plans, outdated land-use policies, artificially high or low flood insurance premiums, and a false sense of security for those home or business owners with property in a special flood hazard area. FEMA should be provided additional resources to accomplish this critical goal.

7. Title: National Predisaster Mitigation Fund

Program Description: This program provides funds to states, territories, Indian tribal governments, communities, and universities for hazard mitigation planning and the implementation of mitigation projects prior to a disaster event.

Fiscal Year 2014 Enacted: \$25 million

Fiscal Year 2015 President’s Budget Request: \$0

Additional Amount Requested: \$30 million

Rationale: Following another year of extreme weather across the country, the mounting costs of disaster response and recovery illustrate a gap in the Nation's attention to mitigation activities that can significantly reduce the risk of natural hazards to homes and businesses. While the President's budget submission again reduces the funding for the PDM fund to zero, it does recognize the need for greater attention to mitigation through the request for the Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, which provides \$400 million to predisaster mitigation activities. While that level of investment could move the needle significantly on risk reduction, the OGSF is far above realistic levels.

Understanding the responsible limits of the Budget Control Act, restoring \$30 million will allow FEMA to continue to support mitigation planning efforts at the State and local level. Additional language may be beneficial to urge FEMA to develop a more actionable strategy that helps the program evolve to support mitigation activities beyond the limited scope of the current program.

8. Title: FEMA Outreach to Tribal Communities

Report Language Requested: The Committee is encouraged by FEMA's commitment to conduct outreach to tribal governments in the wake of increased authority under the Sandy Recovery and Improvement Act (SRIA) but finds increased communication need to occur with the Committee to assure proper levels of engagement continue across the country. While FEMA has utilized existing authority to develop a pilot process, the excessive delay in conducting stakeholder engagement sessions around the country illustrates the limited relationship that has been built between FEMA and Tribal governments over the years. FEMA is just now beginning to develop relationships with Tribal officials, governments, and organizations which, if not done in a timely manner, could delay critical collaboration on a number of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities. As a result, FEMA is directed to provide quarterly briefings to the relevant committees of jurisdiction, assessing the continued progress made on building and sustaining relationships with the Tribal community, as well as any personnel changes regarding Tribal Liaisons at the Headquarters or Regional level.

Rationale: Under the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA), tribal governments were granted the authority to directly apply to the President for a disaster declaration on tribal land, instead of applying through the State. This authority is a positive step for the Tribal community and as guidance is developed, they are critical partners in assuring FEMA policies reflect their unique needs. While FEMA has implemented this provision under a pilot utilizing existing language, development of final guidance must be undertaken to assure tribal governments are utilizing the authority correctly. The delay in conducting outreach has exacerbated FEMA's lackluster tribal outreach strategy and illustrated the lack of full-time Tribal Liaison positions at FEMA Regional Offices.

9. Title: Review of Benefit-Cost Calculations Applied to Mitigation Projects

Report Language Requested: The Committee is aware of the need for benefit-cost analysis (BCA) to be applied to FEMA mitigation projects in order to comply with Office of Management and Budget policy guidance. A proposed project for hazard mitigation should be found cost effective before taxpayer funds are expended. The calculation of benefit-cost, however, takes on new meaning when related to future conditions. Attention to the gaps and shortfalls of the BCA may afford a project undertaken this year more flexibility if informed projections and improved benefit definitions are part of the equation. Therefore, the Committee directs the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to provide a report to the relevant committees of jurisdiction not later than 90 days after enactment of this act analyzing the potential changes to benefit-cost calculations that could provide greater flexibility to rural communities undertaking projects that reduce potential impacts of extreme weather or sea level rise.

Rationale: To assure mitigation activities can support the goals outlined in the President's Climate Action Plan, FEMA should assess whether the current interpretation of OMB policy guidance on benefit-cost analysis truly aligns with the efforts to mitigate against future hazards. Often times, rural or less populous coastal areas face major threats from sea level rise, extreme weather, and erosion but are often denied assistance or access to mitigation funding because benefit-cost calculations rely on current threat information and do not reflect potential future impacts. In addition, BCA tools are limited in the benefits they can calculate and may not reflect key economic benefits that would be afforded to communities if a project was undertaken to reduce the impact of natural disasters on key economic drivers.

10. Title: No Funding for Phases III and IV of REAL ID Implementation

Report Language Requested: The Committee is concerned about the Department of Homeland Security's proposed implementation schedule for REAL ID. The Committee directs that none of the funds made available in this Act be used for the Department of Homeland Security's implementation of Phase 3 or 4 of REAL ID, recognizing that 14 states and territories are not in compliance with the standards dictated by the Title II of the REAL ID Act of 2005, including Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Northern Marianas Islands, Oklahoma and Washington.

Rationale: In December 2013, DHS announced they were implementing REAL ID in four phases. Phase IV of the project, scheduled to begin no sooner than 2016, would not allow citizens from states in noncompliance from boarding federally regulated commercial aircraft unless they had an acceptable second form of ID in addition to their state-issued ID.

11. Title: Preclearance U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Bill Language Requested: None of the funds made available in this Act or any other Act may be used for U.S. Customs and Border Protection air pre-clearance agreements

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entering into force after February 1, 2014, unless: 1) the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, has certified to Congress that air preclearance operations at the airport provide a homeland or national security benefit to the U.S.; 2) U.S. passenger air carriers are not precluded from operating at existing preclearance locations; and 3) U.S. passenger air carriers operated at least 30 percent of the total non-stop passenger departures to the U.S., as determined by the Official Airline Guide schedules, in the 26 month period preceding the decision to establish a preclearance facility at the airport.

Rationale: Language ensures all preclearance agreements are in the best interest of U.S. national security and economy.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff member, Lindsay Kavanaugh or Mercedes Birdsall, at (202) 224-3004 if additional information is required.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator